German cars- identified as top brands by Americans

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GfK survey on brand awareness and image of German cars in the USA

Nuremberg, 23 October 2002 - German cars are very well known in the USA, where they have achieved a very high level of acceptance, particularly Mercedes and BMW. Japanese brands like Lexus and Toyota in particular also enjoy above average popularity. Conversely, Americans give a comparatively less favourable rating to cars produced in their own country. This is one of the results of the survey carried out in the USA in June this year by GfK and Greenfield Online.

In 2001, almost 8.7 million passenger cars and around 8.5 million light trucks, such as pick-ups, SUVs (sport utility vehicles) and MPVs (multi purpose vehicles) were registered in the USA, the world's biggest motor market. In recent years, German motor cars have been able to increase their share of the market on a continuous basis.

One in two recall Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes unprompted

The results of the survey carried out by GfK Marktforschung, Nuremberg, GfK Custom Research, Minneapolis and Greenfield Online, Wilton, USA, show that the brands which are best known in the USA are Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes. These are the brands mentioned unprompted by one in two respondents when asked about German motor cars. Audi and Porsche are given less often: only one in three recalls Audi when asked about German cars and for Porsche, the figure is just around one in seven.

These results produce a picture of the instant brand recall of those surveyed. However, when the interviewees were prompted by being given the names of motor brands, it emerged that between 77 and 88 per cent of them had heard of Audi, Porsche, Mercedes, BMW and VW. At the lower end of the rankings with 6 per cent prompted recall is the Smart car, which is just about to be launched and the Mini, which will be launched onto the market by BMW in spring 2002 and which achieved prompted recall of 21 per cent.

The pinnacle of quality, safety, design and prestige

In answer to the question of overall impression, German and Japanese motor brands both reflected a positive image, which was clearly above that of the US brands. However, what is interesting is that German-made passenger cars distinguish themselves from their Japanese and American counterparts, particularly in terms of qualitative and emotional image, with Mercedes, BMW and Porsche achieving above average results. Cars produced by these motor manufacturers are valued especially highly for their quality, design and prestige. Innovation and the quality of customer services offered by German motor manufacturers were also rated more highly than those of their American and Japanese competitors.

Japanese ahead on price/performance comparison

The only Japanese brand to achieve similarly high results for image as Mercedes and BMW was Lexus, Toyota's premium brand. However, overall, Toyota and Honda products were also given an above average rating. In general, Japanese manufacturers are ahead of their competitors on price-performance ratio - a feature for which German brands are not particularly distinguished, according to American opinion.

Overall, the survey showed that in terms of image, German motor manufacturers have competitive advantages. Coupled with the general consumer trend in the automotive sector towards premium brands, this means that the US market offers German motor manufacturers good opportunities.

The survey

The data have been taken from a study carried out in June 2001 by GfK Marktforschung, Nuremberg, GfK Custom Research, Minneapolis and Greenfield Online, Wilton. Just under 1,000 drivers were surveyed by Greenfield's online bus. The main focus of the survey was to ascertain brand awareness and image of German motor cars in the American competitive environment.

The GfK Group

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